

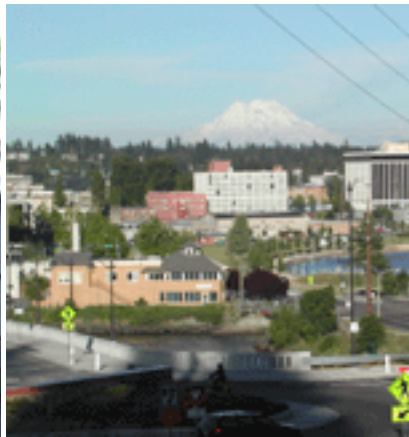
September 8, 2005 (*letter from 6 months later below*)

Dear Family and Friends,

We arrived in Washington state on August 16th, passing by sagebrush hills, vast, endless wheat fields, and the enormous Columbia River Gorge. After crossing the Cascades at Snoqualmie Pass, we had to stop in Roslyn, where *Northern Exposure* was filmed. The Main Street storefronts are just like they were in the TV series, and the town still looked like it was in Alaska.



We finally descended into the lush green growth and tall trees of western Washington. To our surprise it was sunny, and has remained so ever since.* We moved into our house in Olympia the next day, greeted by Zoltan's parents visiting from San Francisco to help us move in.



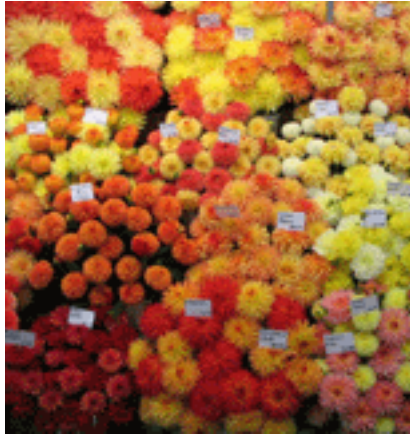
We are settling in to our new home in Olympia. Our new house has four rooms upstairs, and a guest room downstairs. The yard has a huge cedar tree, roses, pear trees, strawberries, and we haven't yet begun to landscape the yard. Mount Rainier is visible from an upstairs window on a clear day. The neighborhood is surrounded by towering firs.



Our neighborhood is on the west side of town, between downtown and The Evergreen State College campus, which is an easy bike ride through forest and farms. From our house, it is a short walk down a fern gully to Budd Inlet, at the very southern tip of Puget Sound. We were surprised on our first day here to see a deer-crossing sign in our neighborhood. We've since seen deer (including a 4-point buck) on the hill leading down to the shore. At the bottom of the hill, on a short walk to downtown, we can pause and watch the Chinook salmon in the Inlet, on their autumn run up the Deschutes River. (They will have to migrate up by Tumwater Falls, next to the old Olympia Brewery.) On the bridge leading to downtown and the Capitol, we can watch blue herons, bald eagles, and harbor seals scoop up the salmon. Residents walk by like it's no big deal. But we have seen plenty of salmon fishermen descending on nearby rivers and inlets.



To mark the Fall salmon run, the Puget Sound Native nations held their annual Salmon Homecoming celebration. Tribal members paddled huge canoes from their reservations to the celebration powwow on Lake Washington in Seattle.



Our westside neighborhood reminds Debi of Madison in the '70's, with a food coop, people riding bikes, bringing pies to their new neighbors, taking dishes to potlucks, and tending their gorgeous flower gardens. The whole city looks like an endless garden, with bright dahlias, gardenias, roses, wild blackberry bushes, and much more. There is also a Japanese Garden, and roadside stands where you can buy a dahlia bouquet for \$5 on the honor system.

Many flowers are sold at the huge Farmer's Market, held Thursday through Sunday in a covered structure downtown. You can also buy fresh peaches, pears, apples, plums, etc., fresh seafood and sweet corn, eat ethnic food for lunch, and listen to live bands. Evergreen's own organic farm also has a Farmer's Market on campus every week, as well as its own produce and flower bouquet deliveries. Though Olympia is in Seattle's metro area, and in a county with 215,000 people, much of the city is rural and forested.



Olympia has a lively downtown, with lots of culture and outdoor art and music (no mosquitoes in the evening!). We have been here only 3 weeks, and have already seen a Pet Parade, with hundreds of dogs, cats, gerbils, etc., usually dressed up and pulled by kids in costume. We have also seen tugboat races at the annual Harbor Days. Every Wednesday, we go down the hill to Tugboat Annie's marina restaurant to hear local Irish musicians jam.



Evergreen is on the quarter system, so Zoltan will not begin co-teaching the American Frontiers history course until September 27. The year runs until June 16, but everyone says that late June-late September are the summer months here. Evergreen's Native cultural center, the Longhouse, is going to celebrate its 10th anniversary with a potlatch just before school begins.



We are taking the opportunity to explore the Northwest before school begins. From Olympia, it is an hour north to Seattle, an hour west to the Pacific Ocean coast, an hour east to the Cascades, and 2 hours south to Portland. We started by driving up the Hood Canal to see our friend Leah and Chuck and their sons in Silverdale, on the Kitsap Peninsula. We went to the powwow on the Suquamish Reservation (the home and gravesite of Chief Seattle).



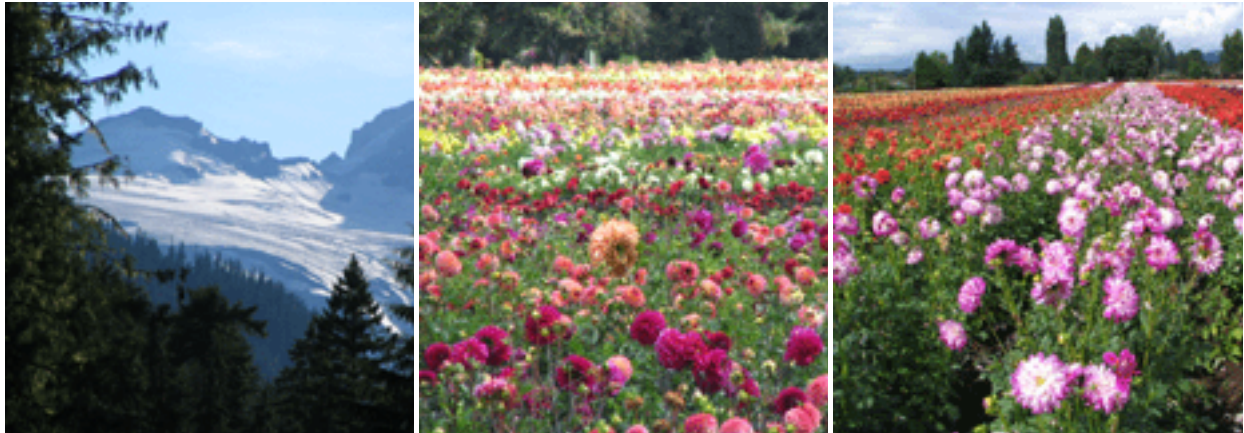
To take a break from unpacking, we headed out to the coast and the Olympic Peninsula. When we first drove out onto the wide beach at Ocean Shores, we had finally arrived at the sea and our new home. We traveled up the beautiful coastline through the huge forested Quinault Reservation to an old stately lodge on Lake Quinault next to the Olympic Mountains.



We also visited the Quileute Reservation, in the coastal village of LaPush, where we dined on Crab Louie Salad while watching sea lions and giant pelicans among the offshore islands.



About 97 espresso stands later, we arrived at our destination in Neah Bay, on the Makah Reservation at the very northwestern-most point in the United States. We had been to Neah Bay together 20 years ago on our first trip to the Northwest. This time we went to experience the 81st annual Makah Days, a cultural festival with children and adults performing traditional dances, men and women holding canoe races, and the elders preparing a salmon bake. We camped within view of whales surfacing between us and Vancouver Island, across the strait in Canada.



Last weekend we camped with our friend Cindy and her family on Mount Rainier, and also traveled south to Oregon's Dahlia Festival on a huge flower farm in Canby, near Portland. The area between Olympia and Portland reminds us of Wisconsin, with more maple and oak, farms, orchards, horses, and wildflowers than in the coniferous areas to the north.

The Northwest weather is ideal for raising a huge variety of flowers, since winter temperatures only rarely get below 40 degrees. The region has other flower festivals, including the Skagit Valley tulip festival in April, and the Sequim lavender festival in July. Debi is in awe of how much bigger the plants and flowers are here; they're "almost like in Alaska."



But our next adventure will be to head over the Cascades to the drier region to the east. As our friend Barb Munson first noticed, Zoltan is a turtle attracted to water, and Debi is a tortoise attracted to desert and ranching country. Here we can have both. Today we walked along the beach near the fishing village of Westport, picking up sand dollars and crab shells, and watching the sunset over the ocean (while eating smoked salmon). This weekend we're headed to a rodeo,

cattle drive, and horse parade east of here. Later we'll head to Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia.



So despite all the time we have spent on moving, we are enjoying this summer. We hope you've enjoyed your summer, despite the terrible times in this country. Part of the point of this letter is to let you know we are doing well in our new home. But part of it is also to let you know how much we miss all of you, and how we wish you would *visit us in Olympia*, or at least keep in very close touch.

* -- Update as of January 12, 2006: Day 25 of Rain -- *Please God, Make It Stop!*

March 8, 2006

Dear Family and Friends,

We hope that everyone is well, keeping warm, and enjoying the winter! We would like to begin by thanking everyone for their gracious hospitality, in letting us stay with you when we were "home" for the holidays. It made our visit that much more pleasant. It was nice to see everyone, if only for a short time. We'd also like to thank our Wisconsin friends Deanna, Bob and Dale for being the first to visit us in our new home. For those of you we were not able to see this time, or who have not yet made it out here, we are looking forward to seeing you when we visit the Midwest this summer.

We have now been in Olympia for six months, and we are still finding majestic views, wonders of nature, and great people. We often find ourselves with big grins on our faces, pinching ourselves, and asking each other if we can believe that we live in such a beautiful place. But there have also been a few drawbacks to living in the Northwest (besides missing all of you).

The rainy season finally came in the first week of November, and became really intense in mid-December. Olympia broke its 33-day record of rainfall. After a 2-day break, we had 16 days more of rain from December 18 to January 20. This rainfall was not the usual gentle mist of the Pacific Northwest, but a hard-pouring rain at least once a day (if not all day). Washington state had seen a 3-year drought, creating loose soils that were eroded by the heavy rain. There have been numerous mudslides, periodically closing the Interstate and Amtrak line, and causing road collapses and detours. The weather was also colder and windier than expected, and even brought one very brief snowfall, covered live on TV as a major crisis. People here don't know how to drive on snow and ice, and there are some very steep hills. We sometimes miss the snow (but notice that we haven't visited the mountains to see it).

Longtime residents have told us that this weather situation is very unusual. We coped with the whole thing quite well, because we didn't know what to expect, and as newcomers we didn't want to complain. But as we can now say here in the Northwest: ***January showers bring February flowers!*** With drier and warmer days, daffodils and crocuses have bloomed, and our tulips are almost up. Cherry trees have blossomed, other trees are budding, and wildflowers will soon be poking up in mountain meadows. (With many leaves gone, we can now see Mount Rainier from our family room window). Gardeners are already planting lettuce and carrots, and we're trimming back roses, but we can't get used to the idea of putting seeds in the ground in *March*.

We also have been able to travel around our new region in the fall and winter. In October, we had a very nice trip to Victoria, the capital of British Columbia on Vancouver Island. There is a strong British influence in the city, which is almost more traditionally British than Britain (including double-decker buses). We left the van in Port Angeles, Washington, and took the ferry to Victoria. Zoltan spent hours in the Native exhibits at the provincial museum. We really enjoyed the city, and will soon take the van over to explore the huge island.

In early November, Jesse came to visit for a week. It happened to be the week that the rainy season began, but we nevertheless had one spectacular sunny day at the ocean. We also spent two days in Seattle at the Space Needle, the Experience Music Project museum, and Pike Place Market. We also visited Tacoma, the Hood Canal, Mt. Ste. Helens, and Portland, Oregon (which he liked the best). Jesse fell in love with the Northwest, and plans to move to the region in June. He plans to live in Vancouver, Washington--the growing city across the Columbia River from Portland--only two hours from us.

During Thanksgiving week, we drove down the Pacific Coast to San Francisco. It was a truly spectacular drive down the Oregon and California coast. We spent Thanksgiving with Zoltan's parents. We also got together with all of our former Madison friends who now live in the Bay Area (these visits were very different now with all of the little kids around). On our trip back home, we drove inland on the Interstate through the mountains, and by 12 hours missed a snowstorm in the mountain pass above the quaint town of Ashland, Oregon. It was well worth the trip--Debi had always wanted to drive from Wisconsin to California, it turns out that we went via Washington!

We finally got to go to Vancouver, British Columbia two weeks ago, for Valentine's Day. Neither of us had been there since we visited in 1985. It has grown tremendously, and is now an extremely diverse and exciting city. We had our Valentine's dinner at a First Nations (Native) restaurant, and saw lots of shops, museums, and markets. The highlight was driving north along the gorgeous coast toward Whistler, where the Olympic ski events will be held in four years. We were amazed that we live only a 3-hour drive from this world-class (but human-scale) city.

We just returned this past weekend from Astoria, Oregon, the fishing town at the mouth of the Columbia River. We attended the 9th annual [Fisher Poets Gathering](#). Earlier in February, Debi had attended (for the seventh time) the national Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, where she met some of the fisher poets, who invited her to their gathering in Astoria. It was an ideal way to learn about the culture of our new home region. We really enjoyed ourselves, though Debi doubts she will ever feel as close to the fisher culture as she does to the cowboy culture. It was an honor to be invited to such a major event, which was taped by the "Today" show (watch for it!).

We've also explored other parts of our region, especially towns with older architecture (which is lacking in Olympia). Port Townsend is a quaint Victorian city on the Olympic Peninsula, with a thriving arts scene. Tokeland is a small fishing village with an 1885 hotel that reminded us of a larger Trempealeau Hotel (only by an ocean rather than a river). We are getting ready for the beach, by getting a kite, and purchasing a clam "gun" and boots for clam digging. Debi is even joining a kite association. We are also looking forward to the myriad of [festivals](#) in the region, including a [tulip festival](#), [lavender festival](#), and Olympia's famous [Procession of the Species](#).

We are making new friends, and not only among the faculty at The Evergreen State College. It is amazing how many people in Washington state are from Wisconsin—we run into them all the time. Zoltan teaches with two colleagues from Wisconsin, some Evergreen students are from Wisconsin, and two other students we knew from Wisconsin also live in Olympia. (Another former Wisconsinite constantly on TV looked "kind of familiar" to Debi, until Zoltan reminded her that Mike Holmgren used to coach the Packers.) We had a fantastic birthday potluck party for Zoltan, drawing together many of our these new friends, and dancing the night away in our family room to old R&B, soul and funk. We also had our own poetry reading, including a guitar jam session by some of the other new faculty. We will be having plenty of parties and potlucks (people here are great seafood cooks), and you're invited.

Zoltan is wrapping up the second quarter of his American Frontiers class, and will soon teach a 3rd-quarter class on Native American issues. The quarter is finished on June 16th, and the new school year will start September 25th. This summer he will work on a research project on the impacts of climate change on Pacific Rim indigenous peoples, such as Maori, Hawai'ians, and Native Alaskans. Debi is doing contractual work with Evergreen, helping to organize a women's labor leadership school.

Our kitties Sammy and Godzilla are doing well adjusting to our new home, though Godzilla is being treated for an enlarged thyroid (possibly the cause of his earlier fur problems). Debi has finally bonded with one of our cats; it is impossible for her to sit still for one minute without Sammy laying down on or next to her.

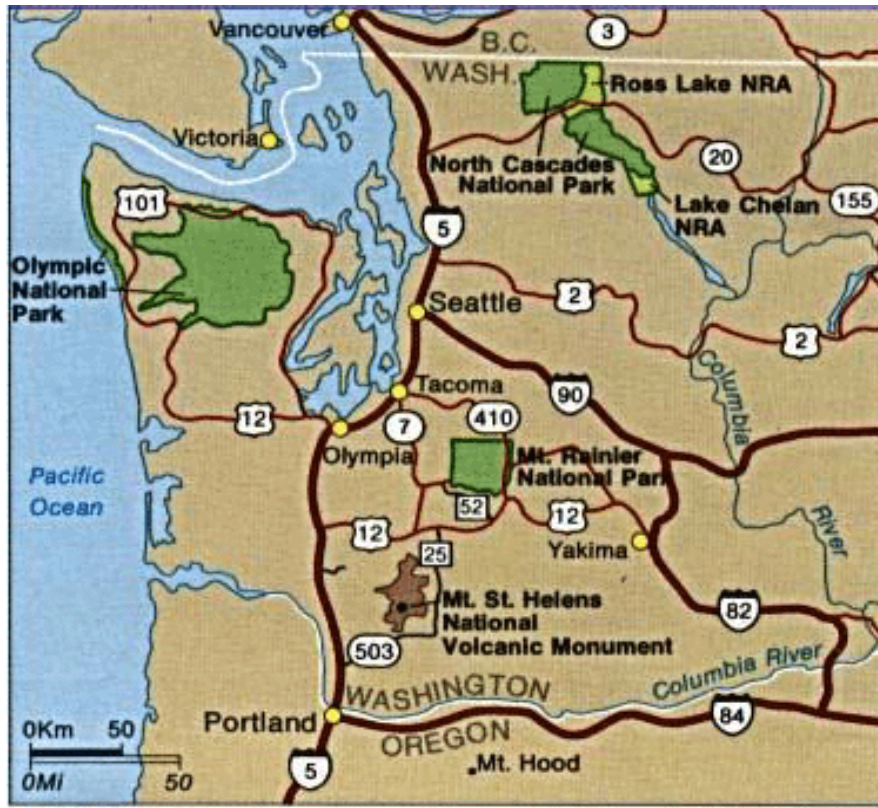
We miss all of you, and would like to invite you to visit us in Olympia if you can.

Debi and Zoltan

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Dear colleagues and friends,

I would like you all to know that I have accepted an offer to become a faculty member at [The Evergreen State College](http://www.evergreen.edu) in Olympia, Washington, starting in September 2005.

Evergreen is a public liberal arts and sciences institution, and one of the foremost environmental colleges in the country. I will be a faculty member in Native American Studies, and teaching as a geographer in interdisciplinary programs.

It has been a difficult decision to move from Wisconsin and the Midwest, where Debi and I have lived for so many decades. We are moving to improve Debi's employment (and other) opportunities, to be closer to my parents in California, and to be close to longtime friends in the Seattle area.

We have long been attracted to the Northwest, and Olympia is [ideally located](#) close to the ocean, the mountains, and rodeo country. It is an ideal place for continuing our [work with tribes](#) on sovereignty and environmental issues. I have long been attracted to Evergreen, and had interviewed there even before coming to Eau Claire. We look forward to seeing you if you visit [Olympia](#), the state capital at the southern tip of Puget Sound, about an hour south of Seattle.

I will certainly miss the faculty, staff, and especially the *great* students here at U.W.-Eau Claire. I have learned a great deal more than I have taught over the past three years at UWEC. I had

looked forward to working on new projects here--as well as on the new community radio station [WHYS](#)--and teaching my Fall 2005 courses. (The department will still be teaching these courses, so keep in touch with the Geography office about them).

Evergreen shares many of the strengths of UWEC, including an emphasis on teaching, collaborative research between faculty members and students, faculty and student activism, and a focus on American Indian studies. Starting this Fall I will be teaching a program on "American Frontiers--Critical Histories" (below).

Washington tribes have played a strong role in fostering Evergreen's amazing Native American Studies programs, including [Native American and World Indigenous Peoples Studies](#), the [Northwest Indian Applied Research Institute](#), and the [Reservation-Based, Community Determined Program](#). The programs' centerpiece is the huge "House of Welcome," or the [Longhouse Education and Cultural Center](#), where a Treaty Symposium drew 400 participants in April. The Nisqually treaty rights leader Billy Frank has been an Evergreen trustee. It is an honor to be asked to join this program.

Debi and I will be here in Eau Claire for most of the summer, as we complete summer projects (such as a collaborative [film project](#) on interethnic relations) and prepare to move. We will visit Wisconsin after we move, since Debi has family in the state, and we will maintain ties with communities here. I will continue to be a member of the national community of geographers, and will stay in touch with UWEC.

Thank you so much for all your support and encouragement over the past three years. Thanks especially to all the students who have been so inspiring with your hard work and open minds. Keep it up!

With much appreciation,

Zoltan Grossman

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